

G. Evaluating Issues of Criminality, Public Safety, and National Security, Continued

Misdemeanors

Significant Misdemeanor:

For DACA only, a significant misdemeanor is a misdemeanor as defined by federal law (specifically, one for which the maximum term of imprisonment authorized is one year or less but greater than five days) and that meets the following criteria:

1. Regardless of the sentence imposed, is an offense of domestic violence; sexual abuse or exploitation; burglary; unlawful possession or use of a firearm; drug distribution or trafficking; or, driving under the influence; or,
2. If not an offense listed above, is one for which the individual was sentenced to time in custody of more than 90 days.

The sentence must involve time to be served in custody, and therefore does not include a suspended sentence. The time to be served in custody does not include any time served beyond the sentence for the criminal offense based on a state or local law enforcement agency honoring a detainer issued by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Notwithstanding whether the offense is categorized as a significant or non-significant misdemeanor, the decision whether to defer action in a particular case is an individualized, discretionary one that is made taking into account the totality of the circumstances. Therefore, the absence or presence of a criminal history, is not necessarily determinative, but is a factor to be considered in the unreviewable exercise of discretion. DHS retains the discretion to determine that an individual does not warrant deferred action on the basis of a single criminal offense for which the individual was sentenced to time in custody of 90 days or less.

Non-Significant Misdemeanor:

For DACA only, a non-significant misdemeanor is any misdemeanor as defined by federal law (specifically, one for which the maximum term of imprisonment authorized is one year or less but greater than five days) and that meets the following criteria:

1. Is not an offense of domestic violence; sexual abuse or exploitation; burglary; unlawful possession or use of a firearm; drug distribution or trafficking; or, driving under the influence; and
2. Is one for which the individual was sentenced to time in custody of 90 days or less.

The time in custody does not include any time served beyond the sentence for the criminal offense based on a state or local law enforcement agency honoring a detainer issued by ICE. Notwithstanding whether the offense is categorized as a significant or non-significant misdemeanor, the decision whether to defer action in a particular case is an individualized, discretionary one that is made taking into account the totality of the circumstances. Therefore, the absence of the criminal history outlined above, or its presence, is not necessarily determinative, but is a factor to be considered in the unreviewable exercise of discretion.

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75

G. Evaluating Issues of Criminality, Public Safety, and National Security, Continued

Misdemeanors (continued)

Multiple Misdemeanors:

Absent exceptional circumstances, a person is not eligible for consideration of DACA if he/she has been convicted of three or more non-significant misdemeanors that did not occur on the same day and did not arise out of the same act, omission, or scheme of misconduct.

A minor traffic offense, such as driving without a license, will not be considered a misdemeanor for purposes of this process.

State Law Immigration Offenses

Immigration-related offenses characterized as felonies or misdemeanors by state immigration laws will not be treated as disqualifying felonies or misdemeanors for the purpose of considering a request for consideration of deferred action pursuant to this process.

Foreign Convictions

When evaluating a request for consideration of deferred action for childhood arrival, a foreign conviction, standing alone, will generally not be treated as a disqualifying felony or misdemeanor. Such convictions, however, may be considered when addressing whether the person poses a threat to public safety and whether, under the particular circumstances, the exercise of prosecutorial discretion is warranted. Cases involving foreign convictions should be elevated for supervisory review.

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Court Dispositions

Requesting Certified Court Dispositions	Using RFE DACA 151 call up from Appendix D, request a certified court disposition for each arrest shown on the RAP sheet, with the exception of immigration violations (see Arrests & Convictions section). The RFE should clearly list each arrest by date, arresting office, charge, and name used when arrested so that the DACA requestor will know that USCIS is requesting dispositions for specific arrests that have become known to USCIS. It is not necessary for the officer to issue an RFE if he/she is able to readily obtain the dispositions on line.
Free Online Court Dispositions	<p>There are many online sites that can be searched and the disposition printed for a file copy. These sites are open to the public; therefore, USCIS can gain the final disposition without doing an RFE or ITD if all the charges in question are found, or if enough evidence can be gathered to deny without the remaining charges.</p> <p>The AAO has upheld prior decisions made using these court dispositions, even though these dispositions are not "certified" by the court, since the information is made available to the public.</p>
Reading Court Dispositions	Court dispositions take as many different forms as there are courts in the United States. There is no way to give specific instructions on how to read such dispositions. Usually the state criminal statutes cite is used to indicate which charge the applicant was actually convicted of. Adjudicators should consult with their supervisor if they have any questions about how to read a court disposition.
Convictions	<p>Pursuant to INA § 101(a)(48)(A), a conviction is a formal judgment of guilt entered by a court or, if adjudication of guilt has been withheld, where:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) a judge or jury has found the alien guilty or the alien has entered a plea of guilty or nolo contendere or has admitted sufficient facts to warrant a finding of guilt; and 2) the judge has ordered some form of punishment, penalty, or restraint on the alien's liberty to be imposed. <p>Nolo contendere means the individual is unwilling to contend. This subjects the individual to some form of punishment, penalty, or restraint as if he/she was found guilty.</p> <p>An adjudication of juvenile delinquency is not a conviction.</p>

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77

Court Dispositions, Continued

Formal Adjudication of Guilt Withheld

Court orders in criminal proceedings sometimes include, as part of the disposition, terms such as: Continued without a finding (CWOFF); adjudication withheld; deferred adjudication, etc. Different jurisdictions use different terminology.

Where there is no formal adjudication of guilt, officers must determine whether:

1. A judge or jury has found the alien guilty or the alien has entered a plea of guilty or nolo contendere or has admitted sufficient facts to warrant a finding of guilt; AND
2. the judge has ordered some form of punishment, penalty, or restraint on the alien's liberty, such as jail, a fine, parole, probation, community service, etc.

The officer must dissect the law, the statute, court order, and conviction, and put all the pieces together to determine whether these requirements for a conviction are met in the absence of a formal adjudication of guilt.

Imposition of Costs as Punishment

Imposition of costs (such as fines, court costs, etc.) in a criminal case constitutes a form of punishment, and therefore satisfies the second prong of the conviction definition.

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Court Dispositions, Continued

Deferred Prosecution	Deferred prosecution or pretrial diversion programs that do not require the defendant to plead guilty or nolo contendere or require the court to make any finding of guilt do not constitute a conviction for immigration purposes.
Dismissals, Dropped, Set Aside	<p>In many cases, the charges may be dropped or set aside in exchange for the DACA requestor agreeing to attend various self-help courses and programs, or if the person who filed the complaint against him/her fails to appear or chooses to drop the case.</p> <p>These are not considered convictions for immigration purposes.</p>
Nolle Prosequi	<p>A decision of "nolle prosequi" is a Latin legal term for "declined to prosecute".</p> <p>This is not considered a conviction for immigration purposes.</p>
Convictions on Appeal	A conviction is effective for immigration purposes, including DACA, while it is on direct appeal. <u>See <i>Plane v. Holder</i></u> , 652 F.3d 991 (9th Cir. 2011), rehearing en banc denied, 2012 WL 1994862 (2012). If the conviction is ultimately reversed on appeal, the DACA requestor is free to file a new request for DACA if otherwise eligible.
Expunged or Vacated Convictions	Expunged convictions will not be treated as disqualifying felonies or misdemeanors for the purpose of considering a request for consideration of deferred action pursuant to this process. The request for deferred action will be assessed on a case-by-case basis to determine whether the person poses a threat to public safety and whether, under the particular circumstances, the exercise of prosecutorial discretion is warranted. Cases involving expunged convictions should be elevated for supervisory review.
STET	<p>The entry of "STET" in a criminal case simply means that the state (Maryland and West Virginia) will NOT proceed against an accused on that indictment at that time. As long as the STET order is still in place and the individual is in compliance, the STET is not a conviction for immigration purposes.</p> <p>NOTE: Carefully review the file for J&Cs, orders, etc., to determine if a subsequent decision on the offense has been made.</p>

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Handling Procedures

General

The evaluation of criminal issues with respect to a DACA request is done after BCU vetting of the TECS check and the FD 258 fingerprint results from the FBI. If the up-front TECS check reveals a hit, the DACA request goes to BCU/Triage. If the hit relates, BCU triage routes the DACA request to the BCU. BCU documents the TECS hit and the resolution in the ROIQ. While the DACA request is undergoing the up-front TECS check, the DACA requestor is placed in the scheduling queue for an ASC appointment to have his/her biometrics captured. If the FD 258 fingerprint results return an IDENT, the BCU reviews the results to determine whether they are germane to the DACA request and the exercise of prosecutorial discretion. The officer may issue an RFE at any point along the way, if necessary to establish whether the issues of criminality relate to a misdemeanor, a significant misdemeanor, a felony, or whether the criminal issues pose a public safety threat. When a DACA request is denied, the denial shall be issued using the standard denial template, which provides a list of checkboxes. The standard denial template is found at Appendix F. Select the box or boxes that apply. For guidance on when to seek supervisory review of a denial involving issues of criminality, see Chapter 9, Section D.

Categorization

If the BCU determines that the case presents issues of criminality, processing of the DACA request must be categorized as either EPS or non-EPS, as defined in the November 7, 2011 NTA memorandum.

Non-EPS Cases

A DACA request posing issues of criminality that are based on IDENT non-EPS, as per the NTA policy memorandum, is handled by the BCU DACA Team as follows:

- The BCU DACA Team will adjudicate Form I-821D, taking into account all issues of criminality.
- If the case is approvable, the BCU DACA Team will approve the I-821D for DACA and adjudicate the I-765 for employment authorization.
- If an approval is not warranted, a denial for Form I-821D and Form I-765 will be issued, pending supervisory review.
- After the decisions have been rendered on Forms I-821D and I-765, the A-file shall be routed to the NRC.

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Handling Procedures, Continued

EPS Cases

A DACA request presenting issues of criminality that are deemed to be EPS, as per the NTA policy memorandum, is handled by the BCU DACA Team. The BCU DACA Team shall refer the case to ICE prior to adjudicating the case, even if USCIS can deny the DACA request on its merits. The BCU DACA Team will refer the DACA request to ICE using the RTI process. The BCU DACA Team will suspend adjudication of the DACA request for 60 days, or until ICE provides notification of its action on the case, whichever is earlier.

- **ICE Takes No Action or Does Not Respond:** If ICE does not accept the referral request or otherwise provide any notification of its action within 60 days of the RTI:
 - The BCU DACA Team will adjudicate Form I-821D, taking into account all issues of criminality, and in particular, the issues presenting an EPS concern.
 - If the disposition of the criminal charges against the DACA requestor is pending, the BCU DACA Team will deny the DACA request on public safety grounds, because the underlying issues of criminality are deemed to pose an EPS concern, pursuant to the November 7, 2011 NTA memorandum. The BCU DACA Team will also deny Form I-765, requesting employment authorization.
 - If the disposition of the criminal charges against the DACA requestor are final, the BCU DACA Team will deny Form I-821D based on the issues of criminality and the conviction. The BCU DACA Team will also deny Form I-765, requesting employment authorization.
 - Upon denial, the BCU DACA Team shall refer the DACA request to ERO, in accordance with the agreed upon method, and update FDNS-DS.

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Handling Procedures, Continued

EPS Cases
(continued)

- **ICE Accepts the Referral:** If ICE accepts the case, the BCU DACA Team will follow the standard protocols outlined in the November 7, 2011 NTA memorandum.

Note: Requests involving issues of criminality that normally would not meet the guidelines for consideration of deferred action will be denied, unless the requestor is claiming that consideration is warranted due to exceptional circumstances and fully documents such claim. Removal shall not be deferred under DACA pursuant to this very limited exception without concurrence from HQSCOPS. In these instances the case shall come to HQSCOPS from the Service Center Director, through the appropriate chain of command.

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H. Adjudicating Form I-821D, Part 3, Criminal, National Security, and Public Safety Information

Introduction

When adjudicating Part 3 of Form I-821D, it is necessary to ensure that clear information and evidence are present to make a final determination. Refer to Chapter 6 for Background and Security Checks and Chapter 8, Section H, for evaluating and handling criminality, public safety, and national security issues.

Questions 1 and 2:

Arrested for, charged with, or convicted of a felony or misdemeanor, or significant misdemeanor in the United States (includes drug offenses and driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol)

OR

arrested for, charged with, or convicted of a crime in any country other than the United States

If the requestor answers "No":

If...	And...	Then...
There is no derogatory information in the A-File(s), IDENT, TECS, EARM, etc.,		Case stays in regular workflow. Continue to adjudicate.
There is derogatory information in the A-File(s), IDENT, TECS, EARM, etc.,	The derogatory information clearly shows that the requestor does not meet the DACA guidelines,	Case is handled by the BCU DACA Team.
There is derogatory information in the A-File(s), IDENT, TECS, EARM, etc.,	The derogatory information is unclear,	
There is derogatory information in the A-File(s), IDENT, TECS, EARM, etc.,	There are clear charges or clear derogatory information, but no clear judgment or conviction,	

If the requestor answers "Yes":

If...	Then...
There is clear derogatory information provided by the requestor and/or in our records,	Case is handled by the BCU DACA Team.
No derogatory information can be found in our records or it is unclear, and the requestor did not provide any additional information or documentation,	

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85

H. Adjudicating Form I-821D, Part 3, Criminal, National Security, and Public Safety Information, Continued

Questions 3 and 5: Security and Related Issues – Engaging in Terrorist Activities; or Engaging in Ordering, Inciting, Assisting, or Otherwise Participating in Genocide, Human Trafficking, and Other Violent Crimes Involving the persecution of Others

If the requestor answers “No”:

If...	And...	Then...
There is no derogatory information in the A-File(s), IDENT, TECS, EARM, etc.,		Case stays in regular workflow. Continue to adjudicate.
There is derogatory information in the A-File(s), IDENT, TECS, EARM, etc.,	The derogatory information clearly shows that the requestor did or may have engaged in terrorist activities or human rights violations,	Put the case through the CARRP process per standard protocols. NOTE: For cases involving Terrorism-Related Inadmissibility Grounds (TRIG), refer to the November 2, 2011 memorandum entitled, <u>Revised Guidance on the Adjudication of Cases Involving Terrorism-Related Inadmissibility Grounds (TRIG) and Further Amendment to the Hold Policy for Such Cases</u> . The other two TRIG related memoranda are, February 13, 2009 memorandum entitled <u>Revised Guidance on the Adjudication of Cases Involving Terrorism-Related Inadmissibility Grounds and Amendment to the Hold Policy for Such Cases</u> , and the March 26, 2008 memorandum entitled, <u>Withholding Adjudication and Review of Prior Denials of Certain Categories of Cases Involving Association with, or Provision of Material Support to, Certain Terrorist Organizations or Other Groups</u> .
There is derogatory information in the A-File(s), IDENT, TECS, EARM, etc.,	The derogatory information is unclear,	

If the requestor answers “Yes”:

If...	Then...
There is clear derogatory information provided by the requestor and/or in our records,	Put the case through the CARRP process per standard protocols.
No derogatory information can be found in our records or it is unclear and the requestor did not provide information,	

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86

H. Adjudicating Form I-821D, Part 3, Criminal, National Security, and Public Safety Information, Continued

Question 4:
Current and
Past Gang
Membership

If the requestor answers "No":

If...	And...	Then...
There is no derogatory information in the A-File(s), IDENT, TECS, EARM, etc.,		Case stays in regular workflow. Continue to adjudicate.
There is derogatory information in the A-File(s), IDENT, TECS, EARM, etc.,	The derogatory information clearly shows that the requestor is or may be a gang member,	Case is handled by the BCU DACA Team.
There is derogatory information in the A-File(s), IDENT, TECS, EARM, etc.,	The derogatory information is unclear,	

If the requestor answers "Yes":

If...	Then...
There is clear derogatory information provided by the requestor and/or in our records,	Case is handled by the BCU DACA Team.
No derogatory information can be found in our records or it is unclear and the requestor did not provide information,	

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I. Fraud Review and Fraud Referrals

Immigration Fraud

In the normal course of adjudication, officers should be aware of fraud indicators. Fraud related concerns that arise during the course of background and security checks should be addressed according to the March 2011 Fraud Detection SOP and the 2008 ICE/USCIS Investigation of Immigration Benefit Fraud MOA.

Fraud encompasses any material representation or omission, accompanied by an intent to deceive. Establishing the elements of fraud is at the core of the work performed during a fraud investigation. In the immigration context, fraud is a willful misrepresentation of a material fact. An omission of a material fact can also constitute a willful misrepresentation, rising to the level of fraud. When reviewing an immigration request, a finding of fraud is generally supported by the presence of the following three elements.

- There must have been a **misrepresentation** or concealment of a fact;
- The misrepresentation or concealment must have been **willful**; and
- The fact must be **material**. See *Kungys v. U.S.*, 485 U.S. 759 (1988) which indicates that a fact is considered material if it had a tendency to influence the decision for the application or petition or shut off a relevant line of inquiry.

A finding of fraud is also supported when the immigration filing contains fraudulent documents that are germane.

The Fraud Detection and National Security (FDNS) Directorate administratively investigates allegations of immigration benefit fraud and produces a Statement of Findings (SOF) that adjudicators use to render their decisions. Most fraud investigations are conducted under the authority of § 212(a)(6)(C)(i) of the Act. In the DACA context, the SOF will document all fraud findings and underlying issues impacting the favorable exercise of prosecutorial discretion.

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I. Fraud Review and Fraud Referrals, Continued

Immigration Fraud (continued)

Individuals requesting DACA are not subject to the 212 inadmissibility grounds, because they are neither applying for a visa nor seeking admission to the United States. They are, instead, seeking the administrative exercise of prosecutorial discretion. Nevertheless, the presence of confirmed or suspected fraud issues are germane in deciding whether the DACA requestor merits the exercise of prosecutorial discretion. As a result, when an individual is found to have committed fraud in connection with a DACA request, the DACA request is denied not because the individual is inadmissible due to fraud, but rather, because the fraud negates the exercise of prosecutorial discretion to defer removal. Denials based on confirmed fraud findings will be supported by a properly documented SOF generated by CFDO. FDNS-DS must be updated to show that the DACA request was actually denied for confirmed fraud. The officer must provide information on the final outcome of a DACA request (e.g., approved, denied, NTA) to the BCU/CFDO so they may update FDNS-DS, accordingly.

When adjudicating Forms I-821D and I-765 for DACA, officers will complete a fraud referral sheet when there are articulable elements of fraud found within the filing. When articulable fraud indicators exist, the officer should refer the filing with a fraud referral sheet prior to taking any adjudication action even if there are other issues which negate the exercise of prosecutorial discretion to defer removal.

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I. Fraud Review and Fraud Referrals, Continued

Immigration
Fraud
(continued)

(b) (7)(E)

If the CFDO is unable to resolve the articulated fraud after exhausting all reasonable efforts and resources, the CFDO may refer the cases to appropriate field office for interview, if an interview may resolve outstanding concerns.

The findings of the administrative or criminal investigation will be recorded in FDNS-DS and reported in an SOF and placed in the A-file to enable officers to make accurate and informed decisions on the DACA requests.

The CFDO will adhere to the Fraud Detection Standard Operating Procedures for referring fraud cases filed under the DACA program to ICE.

DACA cases denied due to a confirmed finding of fraud shall be updated in C3 as "Denial Notice with a Finding of Fraud Ordered" [EC] for tracking purposes. In addition, DACA cases denied due to a confirmed finding of fraud shall be referred for NTA issuance in accordance with the NTA memorandum dated November 7, 2011. The appropriate NTA charge will be determined on a case-by-case basis in consultation with local counsel.

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I. Fraud Review and Fraud Referrals, Continued

System Updates for DACA File Movement Into and Out of CFDO

For reporting purposes, DACA file movement into and out of the CFDO will require the following updates in C3:

- "Sent to the Fraud Detection Unit (FDU) for Analysis" [FF1] when sending a DACA request to the CFDO; and
- "Return from Fraud Detection Unit (FDU) with Results" [HCC1] when receiving a DACA request from CFDO for final processing.

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Chapter 9: Decisions

A. Requests for Evidence

Request for Evidence (RFE)

For DACA requests, when requesting additional evidence, an RFE will be used. A NOID will rarely be used. Appendix D has a list of DACA RFE call ups to be used when processing a DACA request.

Follow the steps below to process an RFE.

Step	
1	(b) (7)(E)
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	

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B. Notice of Intent to Deny

Notice of
Intent to
Deny (NOID)

Follow the steps below to process a NOID:

Step	Action
1	(b) (7)(E)
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	

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93

C. Approvals

Approvals: CLAIMS Verification

Follow the steps below to verify information in C3 prior to processing an approval.

Step	Action
1	(b) (7)(E)
2	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	
9	Check the fee payment information for Form I-765. See Chapter 5 regarding NSF processing and handling procedures.
10	(b) (7)(E)

Continued on next page

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C. Approvals, Continued

Approval
Processing for
Initial I-821D

Follow the steps below to process an approval for a DACA request.

Step	Action
1	(b) (7)(E)
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	Put in ROP order and place a pink coversheet on the left-hand side of the file.

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D. Denials – Supervisory Review

Denials

When the denial involves one of the grounds listed below, obtain supervisory review before issuing the denial when the requestor:

- Has a conviction for any crime committed before reaching age 18, and was tried as an adult; or
- Has been convicted of a “significant misdemeanor;” or
- Has no criminal convictions and outwardly appears to meet the guidelines in the Secretary’s June 15, 2012 memorandum; however, based on other derogatory information obtained through routine systems and background/security checks, there are credible reasons to believe that the requestor poses a threat to national security or public safety. If the requestor poses a threat to national security, the officer should refer the proposed denial for supervisory review after the case has been processed through the CARRP process; or
- Has one or more departures which he/she claims were “brief, casual, and innocent” and therefore are not disruptive of the continuous residence requirement; or
- Has not met the educational guideline.

If the convictions and/or arrests occurred before the requestor filed the Form I-821D and the requestor did not disclose this derogatory information, include the withholding of the material fact(s) as one of the reasons for not exercising prosecutorial discretion in the case.

In novel, complex, or sensitive cases, supervisors will refer the case to HQSCOPS, through the normal chain of command.

Before routing the A-file to a supervisor, the officer should place a supervisory hold on the case in C3. After the supervisor concurs with the issuance of a denial, the officer shall check the appropriate box on the denial template and process the cases in the system for denial. See Appendix F for the DACA Denial Template. If the supervisor determines that the case should be approved, process for approval and document the file as appropriate.

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